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# DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE  
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY  
AT HOME & ABROAD



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# DRAMA

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## PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By A. E. Wilson

ANY chronicle of playgoing undertaken at the fag-end of the year must alas! resolve itself into one of inconsiderable odds and ends. For, quite understandably, there is a slackening of enterprise when pantomime preparations are in the air and well-worn favourites are being taken down from the shelf and dusted.

I have therefore only a sorry list of pieces to review. Two new plays in the West End, revivals of "Twelfth Night" and "The Rivals" and a few suburban adventures and such-like, complete the not very exciting list.

The production which aroused most discussion was that of Michel St. Denis's "Twelfth Night" at the Phoenix. No one has admired more than I the admirable work of this French producer who, in "The Three Sisters" and "The White Guard," has given London productions which by their beauty, their imagination and the subtle fusing of all elements into a harmonious composition, have left a memorable impression.

But I cannot say that St. Denis's handling of Shakespeare was a complete success. If I must see "Twelfth Night" I prefer to see it done with all its conventions observed and without any new-fangled ideas imposed upon it.

Certainly it was a production to delight the eye, though its Italianate setting suggested anything but the appropriate background for English comedy. I enjoyed the delicate performance of Peggy Ashcroft, who spoke Viola's lines most musically and I liked the Malvolio of George Hayes and the serenely lovely Olivia of Vera Lindsay.

Most admirable of all was the Sir Andrew Aguecheek of Michael Redgrave, who dis-

covered a new way of playing the foolish knight, endowing him with some spark of feeling and intelligence together with a pathos which gave him a most likeable quality. This, from one of the most attractive of our young romantic actors, was a performance of brilliant versatility and originality.

But generally this production, while preserving the romance and poetic sentiment of the play, lost much of its robust English fun. George Devine, for instance, presented an astonishingly dry Sir Toby from whom a jest seemed to come with as much ease as from Malvolio himself.

The Old Vic revival of "The Rivals" was entertaining enough but except for one performance, not very striking. The playing of "old English comedy" with the true leisurely grace and polish has become almost a lost art. Such performances as Lewis Casson (Sir Anthony), Antony Quayle (Capt. Absolute), Andre Morell (Faulkland) were good; Hermione Hannen and Meriel Forbes had charm and Ellen Compton's Mrs. Malaprop—remindful of the unquenchable vivacity of Nellie Wallace—was delightful and particularly so because she never forced the humour.

Here again a young actor invented a new way of playing an old part, for Alec Guinness made Bob Acres not a clumsy country bumpkin but a lean and lank fellow with obvious traces of gentility about him. As a comic performance it was a great success and not less so because it owed nothing to tradition.

Merton Hodge's dramatisation of Olive Schreiner's famous "best-seller" "The Story of an African Farm" at the New was disappointing. Once again it must be asserted

## PLAYS OF THE MONTH

that a play should stand as a complete thing—that is to say the playgoer should not be required to fill in the gaps which the dramatist has left blank. Those who have never read the novel—of whom, unfortunately, I am one—could make little of the story. What particular bee was in the bonnet of the idealistic heroine Lyndall who in the end chose to die pathetically but quite incomprehensibly in a veldt wagon? Lyndall, I have since been reminded, had her own notions about women's freedom and independence and was martyring herself for some highly commendable reason. But nothing of that came out in the play. Curigwen Lewis could do little to make the part anything but colourless and such entertainment as there was was due to vivid character studies by Mary Clare, Aubrey Dexter and Frank Birch, and to the pictures of Boer veldt life of the eighties which Basil Dean, the producer, cleverly arranged.

The other new play (at the Apollo) was "Windfall" by H. I. Young and Jeffrey Dell. A hard-up clerk is entrusted by his shady employer with £20,000 to pay to a blackmailer. The employer dies and the clerk is confronted with a nice problem: Shall he tell all he knows to the police or shall he keep the money and elope with a glamorous enchantress? Such a theme might have been treated seriously and psychologically. Here, with many ingenious twists and inventions, it was made into a play of surface excitement, presenting enough suspense and surprise to make it entertaining throughout, thanks largely to expert direction and some very capable acting.

"Gas Light" by Patrick Hamilton presented at Richmond with Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies in the cast was a psychological thriller of genuine interest. It created a feeling of cumulative pressure and intensity. On the whole it was the best new play of the period here reviewed. Probably by the time these lines appear in print its West End production will have been definitely arranged.

Two other "curios" must not go unmentioned—the production by the Repertory Players of James Albery's seventy-year-old "Two Roses" in which Cecil Parker made a decided hit as Digby Grant (the part in which Irving made his first London success) and S. I. Hsiung's "The Western Chamber," done in the conventional Chinese manner at the little Torch Theatre. I thought "Two Roses" charming. There is genuine wit and humour

in its first act, and ancient though its sentiment may be I am glad to hear that Bronson Albery (son of the playwright) proposes to risk it for a run.

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### MUSIC AND DRAMA IN THE FOREST OF DEAN SOCIAL SERVICE CLUBS

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Recently the Forest of Dean Social Service Clubs held their Festival at the Cinderford Miners' Welfare Hall. Candidly I had my doubts about it. I thought it would be another of those Festivals organised to encourage amateur Drama and Music and not for entertaining the audience. Heaven be praised! I was wrong.

The Festival opened with Parry's "Jerusalem" and was followed by songs of the Fleet (Stanford) sung by the Ruardean Hill Men's Choir assisted by Whitecroft.

For the Drama groups Mr. Robert G. Newton had devised a "Show in three Episodes" entitled "When day is done"—I could not quite understand why he called it this as the first episode was in the morning and the second in the afternoon. The casts were as follows:

Episode 1. "The Wayward Lass" (a Melodrama). Performed by the Mitcheldean Social Service Club.

Episode 2. "Star for a Day." Performed by Drybrook Women's Social Service Club.

Episode 3. "When day is done." Performed by Cinderford and Ruspidge Social Service Club.

There was no outstanding individual character; there was not intended to be. It was team work and excellent team work at that. The producer, Claude Abbott took a rather hurried bow at the final curtain. He should have stayed longer for we wanted to show due appreciation to the man behind the scenes, on whom the bulk of the work had fallen.

Miss Miriam Pritchett, the producer of the next two scenes, was ambitious—she chose Shakespeare—and why not? It is good for us to try something out of our scope occasionally. The first scene was from the "Twelfth Night." Sophia Cooke as "Olivia" was good and Flora Whittington in the small part of "Myria" was admirable. Lois Cooke gave a pleasing portrayal of "Viola" but at times she was not always audible. The next scene was more popular with the audience. Gladys Pritchard (she of the hearty laugh) as "Mistress Page," Florence Parsons as "Mistress Ford," and Lydia Whitsun as "Sir John Falstaff" were all excellent and what a charming personality was displayed by little Joan Pritchard as "Robin." Let us have some more Shakespeare, Miss Pritchett.

And so with an impressive rendering by the massed choirs of "Lord who hast made us for thine own" arranged by Holst, this very pleasant evening came to an end. The conductors and accompanists for the evening were Mr. Vernon Evans and Mr. J. C. Hollins. The general arrangements were made by Mr. H. J. Hart assisted by Mr. Hill. We Foresters are a peculiar folk. We do not take to a new thing easily, but when we have proved its worth we stick to it. The Social Service has proved its worth—we shall see many more of these Festivals at Cinderford. One word to the performers however—please learn a little stage deportment, a little showmanship. If you have the goods display them to the best of your ability—we, the audience, like it.

C. M. WOODMAN.

# WAS HAMLET A MINOR?

By A. J. Talbot

ANYONE reading "Hamlet" for the first time must experience a feeling of surprise and bewilderment upon arriving at the passage which shows that Hamlet is in full manhood, for up to this point the many references to his youth—"this mad young man," "thou noble youth," and so on—together with this Prince's lack of authority, would have led the new reader to suppose that Hamlet was little more than a boy in the prime of adolescence.

Yet there is no getting away from it: Hamlet's exact age is plainly and, seemingly, deliberately stated and underlined. The First Clown remarks that he has been a gravedigger since the very day that Hamlet was born. A few lines later he says: "I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years." Hamlet, then, is thirty; and this is roughly corroborated by Yorick's skull, which has "lain in the earth three and twenty years." Hamlet can remember riding on Yorick's back in infancy.

As against this, it is repeatedly emphasized that Hamlet is a student at Wittenberg university. This fact is difficult to reconcile with Hamlet's stated age, for it does not seem a very likely circumstance that a man of thirty, especially in times when thirty was almost middle-aged, should be a mere student who calls his contemporaries "schoolfellows." If, in a modern play, we read that a character is an undergraduate, we infer, in the absence of any particular reason to the contrary, that that character is of the age of the typical undergraduate, somewhere between nineteen and twenty-three. Similarly, when Shakespeare tells us that Hamlet is a student at a university, we are entitled to assume, in the absence of any particular reason to the contrary, that Hamlet was of the same age as the typical university student of Elizabethan times. ("Hamlet," of course, is supposed to be early Denmark, but Shakespeare always wrote with an Elizabethan background.) Now the age of the typical Elizabethan student was much younger than it is to-day, and we find, for example, that Francis Bacon became a student at Cambridge, and Philip Massinger, John Lyly and Jasper Heywood became students at Oxford, all at twelve to thirteen years of age, John Lyly taking his B.A. at nineteen and Jasper Heywood at eighteen.

Thus, if we hold Shakespeare strictly to his word that Hamlet is a student at Wittenberg, we may not unreasonably suppose that Hamlet's age is seventeen, and we are encouraged in this supposition by Laertes's description of him; for "a violet in the youth of primy nature" has a ridiculous sound if it is meant to apply to a man of thirty.

But this conjecture, which seeks to reduce Hamlet's stated age by as much as thirteen years, is not in itself strong enough to put against the First Clown's very clear and definite evidence. Perhaps a brief examination will show which of the two ages fits in the better with the scheme of the play, for it would indeed be a loosely-constructed drama that made just as much sense whether the protagonist were a stripling of seventeen or a mature man of thirty.

If the Clown is right and Hamlet is thirty, then Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude, must be about fifty. Queen Gertrude has been experiencing a passion for the King's brother, Claudius, a passion so overwhelming that upon the King's death she has doubly braved public opinion by marrying Claudius, her deceased husband's brother, after only two months of widowhood. This, clearly, would be more plausible—and drama is the realm of plausibility—if she were younger. Even in our day fifty is too advanced an age for unreasonable passion on the stage, and in Elizabethan times a woman of fifty was deemed to be in the grandmother class.

Again, if the Clown is right, we have the strange circumstance that Hamlet, a prince of thirty, is politely forbidden, in public, to go "back to school in Wittenberg."

But if Hamlet is seventeen, these improbabilities vanish. Hamlet is a junior and has to go to Wittenberg or not, according to his guardian's wishes. And Queen Gertrude, now only about thirty-seven, is of a much more suitable age for illicit love.

So, too, does our conjectured age of seventeen fit in very much better with Hamlet's love affair than his stated age of thirty. Ophelia is young. Her brother, Laertes, describes her as a "rose of May," and talks to her as if she were not long out of the schoolroom. She cannot be more than sixteen. At the beginning of the play a highly romantic

## WAS HAMLET A MINOR?

affair is burgeoning between her and Hamlet, and our instinct is that a Hamlet of about her own age would make a better Romeo to Ophelia's Juliet than a Hamlet of thirty. Our instinct is right, for the indirect evidence of Polonius, her father, shows that Hamlet cannot be thirty, as the Clown said: the objection of Polonius to the courtship is not that Hamlet is too old a suitor for a girl of sixteen, and that the disparity of fourteen years between their ages is too great; on the contrary, the whole purport of his speech (Act I, Sc. iii) is that Hamlet, in the fever of youth, is not old enough to know his own mind.

"For Lord Hamlet,

Believe so much in him, that he is young." These words to a girl of sixteen, as an objection to her suitor of thirty, make nonsense.

Then there is the puzzling matter of the succession to the throne. Here we have Hamlet, a prince of thirty, only son of the king, and yet at the king's death it does not seem to have occurred to anybody, not even Hamlet himself, that Hamlet is the rightful and automatic successor. His uncle Claudius ascends the throne, without arousing protest. There seems to be something rotten in the laws of succession in the State of Denmark. But with a Hamlet of seventeen the whole matter becomes quite straightforward. Hamlet is a minor and his uncle assumes power as regent. Hamlet's comment that his uncle had "popp'd in between the election my hopes" now makes better sense: a royal heir of thirty has more than "hopes," he has a certainty, of succeeding at his father's death, whereas a royal heir of seventeen has "hopes" of succeeding when he comes of age at eighteen.

Moreover, with Hamlet as a minor, there is, perhaps, a motive for Claudius's indecent haste in marrying the Queen: he wants to get well entrenched in power before Hamlet comes of age and can make difficulties.

Thus, all the way through, our conjectured age of Hamlet fits in perfectly with the scheme of the play, and the age given by the Clown is always at variance with it. It is plain enough that the play was originally designed and written for a youthful Hamlet and that afterwards Hamlet's age was arbitrarily raised to thirty. What was the reason for doing this? Doubtless it was that when they came to cast "Hamlet" they found that the title-role was beyond the powers of any actor who could

look like seventeen. It is one thing to find a young Woodley and another to find a young Hamlet. Just as composers write a part for a beautiful young maiden that can be sung only by a seasoned mistress of *bel canto*, so Shakespeare had written a very juvenile lead which only a great actor with half a life-time's experience could do justice to. But whereas in Opera nobody minds if the young maiden is played by (in Captain Corcoran's phrase) "a plump and pleasing person," so long as he gets the *bel canto*, convention is stricter in the legitimate, and a mature actor cannot be accepted as a boyish hero, however superb his acting. The problem Shakespeare had set was met in the Elizabethan theatre by boldly raising Hamlet's age to thirty in Shakespeare's MS.

There is circumstantial evidence of this. Joseph Taylor is said to be the original Hamlet. He was at the time about seventeen. Burbage it is certain was one of the first Hamlets. It well may be that Joseph Taylor was tried in the part and found wanting, and that they put the age up to thirty and called in Burbage. Burbage was about thirty-five.

It is quite possible that the Queen's line in the fencing scene:

"He (Hamlet) is fat and scant of breath" may be another addition to the play, inspired by Burbage's tendency to *embonpoint*.

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## "THE SEAGULL"

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Perhaps the producer's main problem in this play is that of making a unity of it, of reaching its essential humanity by means of a number of "one-way-track" characters, whose chief occupation is self-pity. In this production the individual characters had been carefully studied, but their relations to each other remained vague—the "one-way-track" persisted. The opportunities for humour which the play offers might have been more developed—some of the laughs were more Board of Education than Tchekov. Trigorin's performance was undertoned, but Irina's and Nina's were vital and well contrasted, while Shamrayev was pleasantly explosive and gave real life to his moments. Constantin had made a careful and consistent study of a very difficult part. The play would have been helped by a greater variety in lighting and more concentration of light on focal points.



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# PARIS ROVERS' CHRISTMAS

By Ina Jepson

I WAS staying recently in a suburb of Paris and saw advertised for Sunday "à 3 heures" at the Mairie the "Fête Annuelle des Routiers, Scouts et Louveteaux." Having heard that there was good talent among the Rovers, the appointed hour found me on a hard wooden tip-up seat, one of a lively audience of admiring parents with the younger members of their families. A small boy munched "brioches" with evident relish in my ear through much of the performance, and joined lustily in the choruses.

The first Mime was a rather involved story in which "Laur-el et 'Ardi'" attempted first to learn to ride a bicycle, then to light a camp fire. They showed their usual engaging and ingenious inefficiency, and were eventually instructed in both arts by a cub pack who had chosen the same spot for their lawful occasions. There was from the first in this, as in all the succeeding plays, no fear of the actors drying up. On the contrary, their flow of voluble and improvised French was difficult to follow, as at most times two characters spoke at once and not infrequently the whole company joined in. Rovers, acting as stage-hands, dodged about with a microphone, placing it in likely positions, so alternate boomings and whisperings reached one and kept one's ear at the stretch. The acoustics of the "Grand Salle" left much to be desired. Words, however, were less important than actions, and everyone heartily appreciated the slapstick nature of the comedy. One gathered that in the end "Laur-el et 'Ardi'" became smart and business-like and joined the cubs, though this needed some exertion of the imagination as I feel sure they would agree. The make-up of the characters was remarkably good: Laurel large and enterprising, Hardy puzzled but anxious to help. The originals were at the moment much written up and photographed in the Paris papers, so the play had an instantaneous success. There was certainly enough dialogue to supply a full-length comedy.

The programme proceeded on its way with choruses and yarns while the scenes were changed and the wish expressed by its promoters was fulfilled: "Ils n'ont voulu ce soir que les mieux adapter et vous communiquer leur joie scout," and the very

lovely airs of some of the camp songs were not a little moving.

"Nous chantons parce que la vie est belle,  
Parce que notre joie est immortelle :  
Dieu nous fit pour être heureux,  
Et nous garde encore bien mieux."

Several items had to be omitted, as the exuberance of the players spun out the plays to a formidable length. The heat was great, and some of the audience began to wilt visibly, but no one except the Mayor, who had looked in to give countenance to the Fête, dreamt of leaving. Speeches of great prolixity and solemnity were interspersed, and though largely inaudible, drew much applause, and at 6 o'clock was announced "Noël Routier." No "few words" were spoken (as in England is usual before such a play) to produce in the onlookers a suitable frame of mind. The Latin to whom religion means much takes it as part of his ordinary life and thought, and no transition of mood appears to him necessary.

The curtain rose on four figures standing stiffly and in silence, holding each a lighted taper: Monsieur, Madame, bonne and chef. Joseph in a brown habit, and Mary, a slender youth in blue draperies, entered. The audience accorded them glad recognition. Joseph made his appeal for shelter in voluble French to each of this household in turn, shoulders raised and palms outstretched. He handed the microphone politely to Mary who made her woman's request in a boy's clear treble. She consulted Joseph, but as each light was extinguished gave up in despair and went sadly on her way with him, leaving the others in their self-made darkness.

The second scene was between the notary, the centurion, two shepherds and a woman of the town. The former dressed in a toga and carrying an umbrella sorted papers at his desk, throwing them about the stage. He had enjoyed his "vik-end" and making the census was boring, but Cæsar had ordered it to be so that was that. He unrolled a huge parchment—"all this red-tape nonsense"—and proceeded to enter the names of the shepherds who now approached timidly. They moved as one man and gave one name: "Jean." The notary roared at them and called in the centurion who said he would soon settle the

## PARIS ROVERS' CHRISTMAS

problem. Nothing however would part the friends who sidled round the stage and were finally entered under the one title.

The group was now joined by a loud-voiced blowsy woman who made free with the shepherds. Had they heard the latest? A man and woman seeking shelter for the night, the woman in no state to be wandering the streets. She had been the last to refuse them as her house was unsuited to such a purpose. This struck the notary and centurion as a very good joke indeed. They entered the lady's name on the parchment. This scene with its many topical allusions to the Government, the plight of the franc and red-tapery in general went down well as howling farce.

The stage was now dimly lit and the theatre hushed to silent anticipation as two small and very convincing angels with folded hands entered from either side, crossed, re-crossed and disappeared. The tempo quickened as a group of noisy shepherds hurried on in great excitement. Some said it was essential to leave their sheep, others thought it a mistake. They argued hotly till one of them sighted the Star. With shouts of joy they tramped round and round the stage following its course. "Elle marche!" they cried. The audience laughed at their antics. "Elle cours!" and they broke into a trot, till having circled round some half-dozen times they were suddenly brought to a standstill by the sound of the Angels' song. They knelt in wonder and doffed their hats. The two small angels reappeared and slowly drew aside the curtain which hid the manger tableau. Joseph and Mary knelt adoring and the child lay on the straw, the Star shining above. Cries of "Ahl" and loud applause greeted the familiar group. The shepherds now rose and drew nearer, some pressing forward, others more reluctant. They decided that they could not approach empty-handed, so fumbled in their pockets and each produced some small present. The last to be offered was the pipe of the youngest lad, who joyfully gave one last toot before laying it at the foot of the crib. Mary thanked them graciously and told them of her Son, the small angels closed the curtain and the play ended on a note of rejoicing.

No one witnessing the performance could doubt the joyful sincerity of the boys taking part, and we came out into the Sunday evening knowing that we had seen the spirit of the Middle Ages once more come to life.

## SOME HINTS ON PROPERTIES

By T. A. Thomas

**M**OST amateur producers feel, when faced with the problem of providing suitable properties for their plays, that they ought to aim at obtaining the actual historical article, or at least an excellent imitation of it. Hence the agonised scourings of the neighbourhood for such oddments as spinning wheels, and harpsichords, or genuine Chippendale chairs to adorn the local stage. This attitude may be a result of the film industry, which boasts of the historical accuracy of its settings, and its expensive trekking across the world for genuine local colour.

Most producers have also noticed how disappointing Great Aunt's lustres and "whatnots" are apt to look when viewed from the other side of the footlights. Their faded colours strike a wrong note of dreariness against the fresh paint of the scenery. Besides, many an amateur producer has added to his grey hairs by taking on the responsibility of a load of valuable heirlooms, and walked in fear and trembling ever afterwards—visualising all the consequences of fire and thieves.

"Props" are things we cannot get away from—they often create more atmosphere than elaborate scenery and costumes. They help the actors by giving those restless hands of theirs something to do. Choose them with an eye for the general colour scheme, and preserve a correct colour balance. A good example presented itself in a production of the "Three Musketeers." The villainous Cardinal, attired in brilliant red robes, held in his arms a lovely white cat (real). The effect of Puss's snowy coat against the red gave an impression of luxury and feline cunning in keeping with the character of the man himself.

First of all, let us consider what I call "architectural props." By this I mean the more solid and larger properties which appear on our stages. It is from these that the audience obtains its first impressions. They are the deciding factors in the placing of the scene. For instance, in a recent production of a passion play by my own group, we successfully created the interior of a Roman villa with a surround

## SOME HINTS ON PROPERTIES

of grey curtains, suitable massive furniture, and, at the back on a pedestal, a huge golden eagle (of papier-mâché). This symbolised the might of Rome, and branded at once with Imperial dignity the occupants of the stage. A couple of light pillars, fixed into square bases and easily moved, also proved useful in creating massive gateways, etc., in exterior scenes. The large cardboard cartons shoes are packed in are also useful; when, painted stone colour, they appear as walls or sides of houses. Being collapsible, they make for easy storage. Such props are best seen set against a curtain surround or cyclorama, and rely for much of their effect on their apparent solidity.

Next come the "hand properties," or all those small articles the actors actually handle, such as shields and spears, scrolls and lanterns, fans and pitchers, etc. All these can be successfully imitated in papier-mâché, cardboard, wood, and tin. A little ingenuity and nimble fingers are needed, but I do not think either virtue is lacking in the splendid dramatic societies of our day. Oftentimes, larger-than-life properties are convincing when viewed from the audience, so do not strive to be too accurate in your measurements. In one production a gay note was struck by a basket of "fruit." This consisted of an old large shallow basket, filled with huge balls of orange and yellow crepe paper, mixed with green paper leaves. Crepe paper is also useful for scene painting. Useful landscapes and ground rows can be made of frames covered with green paper, and brown ploughed fields, farms, etc., cut out and applied to the background. It is a quick and clean method, provided one is careful of the choice of colours. Tree borders can also be made of the same material cut into jagged strips and hung from the flies.

Never do away with your props provided you have sufficient space to store them. Often they will come in, with slight alterations and a new coat of paint, for your latest production. That is the beauty of making your own props—one is able to alter their construction without damaging anyone else's finer feelings.

Finally, here is an old and tried recipe for papier-mâché, that very useful material in property making. Shred up old newspapers and mix with flour and water paste into a pulp. When dry, it can be painted any colour and will stand up to quite hard wear.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### "THE WHITE GUARD"

SIR,

Mr. Earle's criticism of my criticism of "The White Guard" is a trifle confused and inaccurate. When did I ever describe the production as "indifferent"? He seems to misunderstand my intention altogether.

Let me explain. One of my objects is to prevent the habitual depreciation of the English Theatre, not because I like flag-wagging, but because I believe this constant belittling of home-products is genuinely unjust. For example, I have done my best to explode the common notion that the New York theatre has a lot to teach us. In the same way I try to counter the idea so dear to a very vocal few that any foreigner who lands here must inevitably be six times cleverer than any native. If our visitor can prove exceptional ability, good. Our theatre is the gainer. But first let him prove it instead of being swept into an unearned glory on a wave of publicity. The foreigner may not ask for or want that publicity, but there are certain cliques here who will intemperately force it upon him. That, I think, has been the misfortune of M. St. Denis, who may well ask to be saved from his too voluble friends.

I could not find in "The White Guard" any proof of exceptional abilities: it was a competent production of a certain school, a school, incidentally, of which I have been a champion. If Mr. Earle wants it, I can produce pieces of mine written years ago in praise of Stanislavsky long before he became a by-word over here. There are few names in the modern theatre which I more respect than those of Chekhov and Stanislavsky. All I meant was that a derivative production, however competent, of a Russian play in the Russian tradition, especially with a company many of whose members had been working together in Chekhov under Mr. Gielgud, did not prove anything more than competence in the direction. I sincerely believe that there are half-a-dozen English producers who could, with this company, have put up as good a mimetic rendering on a Russian theme as this one. Therefore there was no case for shouting the roof down on behalf of M. St. Denis. That was all. I can see no "rudeness" in that. I may have had something to explain. I certainly have nothing to withdraw.

Yours, etc.,

IVOR BROWN.

20, Christchurch Hill, N.W.3.

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### A SCHOOL ON COMEDY

The response received to our proposed School on Comedy has been so encouraging that it has been decided that the School will definitely take place in Easter Week, from Tuesday, April 11th, to Sunday, April 16th, at King's College of Household and Social Science, Kensington. The detailed prospectus will be issued later and may be had on application to the British Drama League.

## BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF  
**THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE**  
INCORPORATING  
THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY

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*Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.*

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THIS Number brings the best New Year wishes of the Editor to all members of the League and to the readers of "Drama." In spite of great uneasiness throughout the world there seems no slackening of British interest in the Theatre, and in this the well-known fact is illustrated that political unrest often heightens public consciousness so as to secure an even greater sensitiveness than usual to whatever is dramatic in life or art. Not war itself can blot out the Theatre, and in an early number we hope to publish an important article in which Mr. Phillip Lorraine, just back from two months in Spain, will describe stage conditions in Barcelona which is itself a city under a state of siege. For all that, we must be thankful that the New Year begins in an atmosphere of peace at home. Let us make the most of it, and see that the arts of Peace, the Drama among them, are practised with all the energy at our command, both for their own sake and for the general good.

An important legal case has just been decided by the Court of Appeal who reversed a County Court decision given in favour of British Amalgamated Theatres Limited against the Bleak House Club at the Perivale Factory of A. Sanderson & Sons. The latter had obtained permission to perform "The Geisha" on four evenings eight months ahead of the application. A deposit of £4 4 0 was made for the loan of the script and £30 for parts, but later the Society desired to cancel the booking. They were then informed that this could not be done without forfeiture of the deposit. All amateur societies will be glad at the result of the appeal, for had judgment been given otherwise, a serious position would have been created for any society who found itself unable to stage a play or opera for which permission had been already obtained.

"Waiting for Lefty," the well-known socialist play by Clifford Odets, has got into trouble. The production of the play at the recent Chester Drama Festival seems to have been made from the complete text, which contains passages unlicensed by the Lord Chamberlain. A case is pending, and we must not presume to deal with its details. Nevertheless, this seems an opportunity to warn amateur Societies and others that because a play is printed in book form, and has already been produced elsewhere, it does not always follow that the text as printed has obtained the Lord Chamberlain's sanction.

On another page we print the entries received to date for the Three-Act Play Festival organised in the Northern Area. Whether or not the conditions in other areas would enable such a Festival to be held is a moot point, but the northern entries as printed, make a brave show, and the artistic result of the experiment will be watched with interest, especially by those who are able to visit the Final Festival at Buxton, which will be held from April 24th to 29th, 1939. Mr. Hirst and his Committee deserve congratulations for the spirited manner in which they have organised the Festival, which was started at what seemed a very unfavourable moment.



# A SPATE OF ONE-ACT PLAYS

Reviewed by F. Sladen-Smith

THE writing and publishing of one-act plays continues remorselessly—it has become a new industry—and, faced with a huge batch of short pieces, compression is inevitable unless the whole of the January number of "Drama" is to consist of book reviews. Therefore, with regret in some cases and relief in others we must content ourselves with brief notices; the magic numbers and letters signifying the number of men and women in the cast.

"Twelve One-Act Plays." Pinker's Play Bureau. 3s. 6d.

"Let's Raise the Curtain." Twelve one-act plays. Collected by Jean Belfrage. Collins.

"The Prisoner of Hope." By M. Creagh-Henry and D. Marten. S.P.C.K. 1s.

"Tarnish." By A. J. Talbot. "Chez Boguskovsky." By A. J. Talbot. "Little Boy Lost." By Horace Shipp. "Summer Vacation." By Stuart Ready. "He Boxed Her Ears." By Ida Gandy. "A Pottle o' Brains." By Dora Clement Salaman. "The Apple Tree." By Elizabeth Richardson. Deane. 1s. each.

"Benedict." By Charles Causley. "Snakes and Ladders." By Winifrede Trencham. Muller. 1s. each. "The Happy Ending." By Francis Morton Howard. "Word of Honour." By Thomas Kelly. French. 1s. each.

"Twelve One-Act Plays," from Messrs. Pinker's Play Bureau contains a mixed bag. "Stars and Strikes," by Raymond Latham and Laurence Housman (4m., 2w.), is a fairly amusing cinema-studio shindy. "Jules" by Stuart Ready (1m. 5w.) is a comedy of will-reading and money-leaving, smart enough provided the audience appreciate the point at the end. "We do it for love" by Terence Bowen (5m. 6w.), an amateur rehearsal, funny, but rather too long. "Mr. Hacker's Whatsisnames" by H. V. Purcell (1m. 3w.). As the title suggests, this rather absurd farce would have gone down well in the old Music Hall days. "The Children of Dreams" by Avrom Greenbaum (3m. 2w.). A struggling author's characters come to life and inspire him to go on writing. "Five Characters in search of a Change" by Hugh Beresford (3m. 4w.). Again, the author's characters come to life, this time in a more amusing manner but with less result. "Opportunity" by Leonora Carr (3m. 4w.). A strange, rather effective drama; the character of the half-wit requires skilful treatment. "The Dear Queen" by Andrew Ganly (1m. 4w.). Somewhat moving study of three old ladies in a remote Irish house, wrapped in dreams and memories. "John Brown's Body" by Norman Leven (2m. 5w.). We found this fantasy of a Duchess, her daughters and husband and a completely mystifying John Brown, unintelligible. "A Case of Arson" by Herman Herijermans, translated by Christopher St. John (10m.). A grim interrogation by a District Magistrate of a number of people concerned with a fire in which a child has lost her life. "Coal Dust" by G. Stanley Whetton (3m. 2w.). Comedy of a miner's household which suddenly turns to tragedy. Familiar detail but actable. "Prelude to Prayers" by T. M. Watson (4m. 4w.). An uncomfortable study of a Doctor's family, not very well worked out.

In "Let's Raise the Curtain," Miss Jean Belfrage has

collected the following plays. "Martha" by Joe Corrie (2m. 2w.). A deeply moving picture of an old Scotswoman who, believing that her son is returning from France (in 1918) prepares, with joy, a meal for him. Although killed in the war, the son appears; the scene which follows is almost unbearably pitiful. "Storm Island" by J. W. Herries (2m. 4w.). Deals with a Highland castle, a new Laird, and a mysterious fairy island, with as was to be expected, a tragic climax. "In the House of Despair" by Ida Gandy (7m. 7w.). A morality play, effective up to the "happy ending" which, however necessary, lacks conviction. "The Home Front" by Hal D. Stewart (7w.). A well-known Scots play with a skilful mixture of comedy and tragedy; period 1918. "Her Proper Pride" by L. Allen Harker (1m. 3w.). A peaceful little comedy of middle-age. Mr. Cornelius Connop proposes to the younger of two sisters, is refused from a sense of pride, tries again, is accepted. All is well. "The Brown Book" by Beatrice Mayor (1m. 2w.). Almost a morality play. The bitterness of lost illusions well expressed. Effective atmosphere. "When did you last see your Father?" by John Davidson (7m. 1w.). A dramatization of the well-known picture. Of its type, neat and arresting. Requires competent child actor. "Time and Mrs. Podbury" by Mary Pakington (7m. 4w.). A fairly amusing fantasy; rather too long for its joke. "The Gift" by A. I. Douglas (3w.). A Scots play of second-sight. Naturally, Margaret MacDonald sees tragedy in the crystal, and the play ends with a shriek and a moaning wind. "Victorian Nights" by Tyrone Guthrie (3m. 4w.). This musical evening is scarcely a play. It is amusing, but could be terribly dull unless skilfully produced and acted. "A Traveller Returns" by Clemence Dane (7m. 1w.). An undoubted thriller. To the tap room of "The Ship Ashore," on Hallowe'en, comes a ghost to save his brother and force a murderer to confess. "Mr. Edwards" by F. Carmichael Brunton (2m. 2w.). A Jacobite play of a spy (a very obvious one) foiled by a girl who gives him her dead lover's letters instead of an incriminating document.

Plays published separately are: "The Prisoner of Hope" by M. Creagh-Henry and D. Marten (13m. 6w.). Although short, this play has a prologue and two acts, and in the life of the blind beggar, Dan (later healed by the Messiah) the familiar incidents of the ministration and the crucifixion are shown from a somewhat new angle. "Tarnish" by A. J. Talbot (5m. 3w.). Was the late John Pardoe a saint or a sinner? The author is content to leave us puzzled. Good characterisation. "Chez Boguskovsky" by A. J. Talbot (4m. 3w.). Here the author is on more familiar ground and this comedy of the aristocratic Police-Sergeant and Policewoman, and the remarkable picture thief, Boguskovsky, should act well. "Little Boy Lost" by Horace Shipp (2m. 4w.). Shows the horror of a narrow-minded father at discovering that his son has become an acrobat and has accepted a job in a circus. "Summer Vacation" by Stuart Ready (6w.). A fairly well-made play. Seaside boarding-house setting; some excitement and pathos. "He Boxed Her Ears" by Ida Gandy (3m. 5w.). A farce in rhyme concerning an unfortunate boy born with ears of different sizes (see title) for explanation. The producer needs a sense of style

## A SPATE OF ONE-ACT PLAYS

and of humour. "A Pottle o' Brains" by Dora Clement Salaman (2m. 4w., some children). A rollicking costume farce, written for village players. Children play an effective part in it, and the authoress has wisely softened its medieval cruelty. "The Apple Tree" by Elizabeth Richardson (2m. 4w.). A play about the Rossetti family ought to be interesting, but the dramatist misses her opportunity by concentrating on the refusal of Christina to marry a man she thought was an atheist. "Benedict" by Charles Causley (3m. 2w.). The strange character who turns out to be a lunatic is not unfamiliar, but, given a good actor in the main part, this play should arrest attention. "Snakes and Ladders" by Winifrede Trentham (2m. 4w.). Amusing realistic comedy concerning a football pool. A neat climax. "The Happy Ending" by Francis Morton Howard (2m. 4w.). The redoubtable Mrs. Scanlon, supposed to be on her death-bed (this proves to be a mistake), and her relatives composing epitaphs is a lugubrious joke, but at times the play is very funny. "Word of Honour" by Thomas Kelly (3m. 2w.). An Irish Drama of the "Tans." The usual atmosphere and the usual tragic old woman, but the play has moving qualities.

Also received; "Spanish Wine" a comedy by F. Austin Hyde (2m. 4w.). "Fools All Four" a farce by S. Montgomery (2m. 2w.). Based on an old Norse Tale. "The Hat" a comedy by Editha Blaikley (5w.). "Shilling Teas" a comedy by Kitty Barne (6w.). Deane. 1s. each.

"Strictly Doctor's Orders" a light comedy by Albert Coates (2m. 2w.); "Sense of Honour" a drama by R. J. Macgregor (3m. 2w.). Muller. 1s. each.

### HISTORICAL PLAYS

"Short Historical Plays by Modern Authors." Edited by E. R. Wood. Macmillan. 2s. 6d.

"For the Garland of the Realm." By Gerald A. Tate. Shakespeare Head. 1s. 6d.

"The King Decides." By John Hampden. French. 1s.

"The Constant Gardener." By Elspeth Briggs. Capricornus. 1s.

"The Peacemaker." By K. M. Briggs. Capricornus. 1s.

"Wi' a Hundred Pipers." By L. C. L. Murray. Deane. 1s.

"Short Historical Plays by Modern Authors," edited by E. R. Wood, has a useful series of plays arranged in historical sequence. It contains well-known pieces such as "Women at War," "Prelude to Massacre," "Campbell of Kilmohr," and Housman's delightful glimpse of Victoria hearing the news of her accession, "The Six O'Clock Call." Some of the other plays are little more than dramatised incidents. "The Discovery" by Hermon Ould (7m.) shows Columbus quelling a mutiny on the eve of his triumph. "The Death of Sir Thomas More," by F. Johnson (2m. 2w.) gives us some tragic scenes during the last hours of the martyr. "A Room in the Tower," by Hugh Stewart (4w.) is much less of a sketch, and has a good study of Mary Tudor. "On board the 'Golden Hind,'" by Louis N. Parker (15m.) is the trial by Drake of his one-time friend, Thomas Doughty. In "The Four Marys" by Dominic Burke (4w.) the pathos of Mary's last hours is nullified by heavy and stilted "historical" dialogue. "Charles—by the Grace of God" by T. C. Walker (4m. 2w.) is a lively escapade of Charles II at Bridport. "Queen Dick" dramatised by

F. A. Hepworth from a novel by A. T. Sheppard (7m. 4w.), is a fairly interesting study of Richard Cromwell. Mr. James Lansdale Hodson's "Before Trafalgar" (6m.), has arresting moments, but is discursive for a one-act play.

Other plays are "For the Garland of the Realm" by Gerald A. Tate (5m. 1w.). Richard, Duke of Gloucester, receives the youthful Duke of York preparatory to incarcerating him in the Tower with his brother. We see little use in this play, especially as it is written in the well-known "What sayest thou?" style. "The King Decides" by John Hampden, (5m. 1w.). Columbus faces Ferdinand and Isabella and demands the ships, money and men for his adventure. Well written and interesting. "The Constant Gardener" by Elspeth Briggs (3m. 3w.). A middle-aged Royalist with a passion for gardening, is pursued by Roundheads but amiably outwits them. An amusing little comedy. "The Peacemaker" by K. M. Briggs (4w.), a little later in period, is a mere family affair, scarcely worth the writing. "Wi' a Hundred Pipers" by L. C. L. Murray (6m. 3w.). A Cumberland drama of 1745. A wounded Highlander's death saves the family who had rescued him.

### SCOTTISH PLAYS.

"Horoscope." By Joe Corrie. "Madam Martini."

By Joe Corrie. "Up in the Morning." By Joe Corrie.

"The Rake o' Mauchline." By Joe Corrie. "Penny Come Quick." By Gordon Wright. "Three Years to Pay." By Gordon Wright. "Her Luck in London." By Gordon Wright.

"Man Tuesday." By Andrew Anderson. "Youth Hostel." By Andrew Anderson. "Tuesday, Eight-Fifteen." By Paterson Whyte. "Colleges and Corns." By Paterson Whyte.

"The Wanderlust." By Margaret M. Muir.

"Tommy Turnbull's Trousers." By Hal. D. Stewart. Brown, Son and Ferguson. 1s. each.

It is surely appropriate if we begin the Scottish list with four of Mr. Joe Corrie's plays. "Horoscope" (3m. 5w.). The incredible quarrel of a loving couple; reconciled (also incredibly) by the husband's mother. "Madam Martini" (5w.). A comedy of fortune-telling and trickery in general. "Up in the Morning" (2m. 2w.). A distinct improvement. Genuine humour in the predicament of a miner's household rising under the impression they have "slept-in" only to find they are up an hour earlier. "The Rake o' Mauchline" (3m. 1w.). Much the best of the four. A good study of Burns and the faithful Tam Sampson, with Mrs. Sampson and Wilson, the printer, to add value.

Mr. Gordon Wright has three plays in the list.

"Penny Come Quick" (9w.). A play about a tea-shop and a thief. Some good parts. "Her Luck in London" (2m. 4w.). Study of the Forsyth family; pompous father, gentle mother and two stage-struck daughters, the younger just leaving home, the elder returning, disillusioned. "Three Years to Pay" (2m. 5w.). Suburban comedy of impecunious, would-be fashionable women, a broker's man, and a prize of twenty pounds which eases the situation. Mr. Andrew Anderson has two plays. "Man Tuesday" (6m. 4w.). A farce of confused interest taking place in a tropical island. "Youth Hostel" (5m. 1w.). A better play. Exciting scenes in a remote Youth Hostel; plenty of thrills and a neat ending. Mr. Paterson Whyte has two plays. "Tuesday, Eight-Fifteen" (7w.). A

## A SPATE OF ONE-ACT PLAYS

group of women meeting to choose a play are interrupted by a girl who has lost her memory. After fainting, her memory returns. That is all. "Colleges and Corns" (2m. 4w.). The main joke of the play is Uncle Davy's refusal to cut Alexander Anderson's corns unless Jenny Anderson is allowed to go to college.

Other plays are: "The Wanderlust" by Margaret M. Muir (6w.). A series of character studies and some mild complications. "Tommy Turnbull's Trousers" by Hal D. Stewart (7w.). A succession of trousers, sent ostensibly for cleaning, really contain notes for a bookmaker. A workmanlike comedy.

Also received: "Well connected" by Agnes Adam (2m. 2w.). "The Way of a Woman" by Tom Steele (4m. 3w.). "Cupid and Cupidity" by W. D. Cocker (4m. 4w.). "The New Hall" by Agnes Adam (2m. 3w.). "The New Baronet" by Regula Burnet (1m. 4w.). "The Misfit" by I. S. Pithie and M. M. Muir (7w.). All these are comedies. "Entertaining Mr. Ettles" is a farce by Donald Maclaren (2m. 2w.). Brown, Son and Ferguson, 1s. each. "Siller in the Stocking" (5w.) is our old friend "Tyranny and Tea Cakes" by Olive M. Poppewell, and "Pushion and Pests" (3m. 2w.) is Phoebe M. Ree's play "Rats" both done into Scots by Hugh Mack (3m. 2w.). Deane, 1s. each.

### PLAYS FOR YOUNG PLAYERS

"One Act Plays and Sketches." Pinker's Play Bureau. 3s. 6d.

"The Junior Theatre." Edited by John Bourne. Lovat Dickson. 2s. 6d.

"An English Play-Book." By Thonald Holland. G. Bell & Sons. 2s.

"The Dragon who was Different." By Geoffrey Trease. Muller.

"One-Act Plays and Sketches for Boys' Clubs, Boy Scouts and Schools" begins with three well-known plays—"Thread O' Scarlet" by J. J. Bell, "Hewers of Coal" by Joe Corrie, and "In Port" by Harold Simpson. After these we have the following: "The Recoil" by Eric Logan (4m.). A swift tragedy of death by snake-bite in a military outpost in India. "Mr. Hackett's Prize" by H. V. Purcell (2m. 2w.). Wild adventures with a vacuum cleaner. "In my Time," by George W. Y. Porter (6m.). An interesting morality on the theme of the nobility of work. "The Gardener" by Vera I. Arlett (5m.). Phocas, the Christian, provides hospitality for the Roman soldiers who come to kill him. The play has beauty. "The Flash in the Dark" by Hugh Beresford (7m.). An ingenious murder play with the usual false clues and final revelation. "At the Mermaid's Tale" by Oscar Turner (10m.). A rousing adventure with a kidnapped child, a gang of villains, doped drink and some tremendous fights. "Ali the Cobbler" by Martin Shepherd (3m. 1w.). A fairly well-known play. The brothers Ali and Said drink the Christian's "Water of Death" with highly beneficial results. "The Old School" by Lal Norris. A most amusing sketch for two characters—father and son. "The Last Earl of Darby" by Alfred B. Kirk and K. Portman (7m. 1w.). A vigorous, well-constructed tragedy of 1266. The setting, within Chesterfield Parish Church, is unusual.

"The Junior Theatre," edited by John Bourne, contains a more original collection if most of the pieces are slighter. Three are in the Chinese manner; "The Nightingale" adapted from Hans Anderson by Frank

Whitbourne (9m. 1w.) has passages of definite beauty; "Rose Red" by Freda Collins (3m. 3w.) is amusing and actable; and there is also the mime, "The Romantic Tale of the Bumboatman" (5m. 2w.). This mime is the co-operative result of a Women's Institute who decided to compose their own play. Another mime is the Victorian "Penny Wise" by Joyce Thomhill (4m. 6w.). There are also: "The Three Petticoats" by K. Rance Corlett (2m. 6w.), a playlet for small children, "Playmates" by Conrad Carter (9m. 4w.), a picture of the youthful Richard II with a girl playmate, Martha—the vision of approaching Kingship is especially effective—and "Arise, Sir Walter" by Falkland L. Cary (13m. 4w.). This is the longest play in the book and is mainly a dream of fantastic adventures by the youthful Walter Raleigh. It is gay and spirited, but the author is too fond of a feeble joke rather than no joke at all.

"An English Play-Book for Young Actors," by Thonald Holland, is a series of plays used in classroom at the Manchester Grammar School. They are written with the needs and wishes of the young actor in mind; the casts are large, the settings simple. Three are historical, "Melech Richard" dealing with the Crusades, "The King's Peace" with the clash between the Barons and the Justices sent out by Edward III, and "Peasants in Arms" is an episode of the Wat Tyler rebellion. There is also a longer drama, "Monkey Island," taking place on a tramp-steamer, with plenty of trouble and villains aboard. The plays are workmanlike but somewhat heavy, and the gay, rhymed couplets of the last piece, "Susan Pye" by Martyn Skinner, come as a distinct relief.

"The Dragon who was Different and other plays for children" by Geoffrey Trease, contains four simple plays for youngsters. Both dialogue and ideas are simple; we liked best the last "The New Bird," showing the amazement of the birds at the advent of the Aeroplane.

### MIMES

"Mime for Schools." By Isabel Chisman and Gladys Wiles. Nelson. 3s. 6d.

"Stories Arranged for Mime." By K. M. Briggs. No. 1, "The Golden Goose." No. 2, "Whuppity Stoorie." No. 3, "Jasper who Herded Hares." Capricornus. 6d. each.

"Six New Mimes." By Isobel Mence. Mence. 3s.

"Three Mimes." By Isobel Mence. Mence. 2s.

"Mime for Schools" by Isabel Chisman and Gladys Wiles is intended for class work, but some sections are suitable for older students. It is possible for a book such as this to be dull, but here the choice of subjects and their development, both in the elementary stages (simple stories or the remarkable "Evolution" mime) and the more advanced work (such as the complex "History of Aviation") make interesting reading, and, without doubt, will be still more interesting when performed in the school. The three "Stories arranged for Mime" by K. M. Briggs, require a narrator. They are old legends; "The Golden Goose" will be familiar to all; "Whuppity Stoorie" is a delightful Scottish tale; the last, "Jasper who herded Hares" is probably the most effective, but it is certainly the most difficult. Miss Isobel Mence's mimes are of all types; historical, fantastic, Victorian, modern, even, in one case, Scriptural. Some can be played in the open air. They are given in great detail with useful production, costume and make-up notes.

## OTHER NEW BOOKS

"Footnotes to the Theatre." Edited by R. D. Charques. Peter Davies. 18s.

"Ballet Traditional to Modern." By Serge Lifar. Putnam. 15s.

"Costume and Fashion." Volume III. By Herbert Norris. Dent. 63s. the set of two books.

"Stage Lighting for Amateurs." By Peter Goffin. Muller. 5s.

"Plays for Puppets." By Rosalind Vallance. Nelson. 1s. 6d.

BY far the most interesting book in this month's batch is "Footnotes to the Theatre." And, like all really interesting books, it presents difficulties to the reviewer if his space is limited. For the book is a collection of 20 articles on widely differing aspects of the theatre, each one written by an acknowledged expert. The names of the authors and their subjects alone would make one want to read the book, the problems discussed are so varied and so vital. But, although the Editor, Mr. R. D. Charques, in his preface, asks questions such as, is the theatre still dying, how far has the new stagecraft taken us, what are the aims of the modern producer, has great acting perished, how much has the theatre to fear, or gain, from the cinema, and so on, we feel at the end that no very satisfying answers have been given; still less do we feel that the contributors are united in a common view of the essential needs of the present theatre as Mr. Charques so piously asserts. Nevertheless, the book is stimulating and the problem is to single out special articles from among so many contributions. Most of the writers have little patience with present conditions; "the West End theatre, for the most part, presents the half-alive to the half-alive," writes Mr. Louis MacNeice in "The Play and the Audience," a subject which both he and Mr. St. John Ervine tackle vigorously; while, in contrast, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth's description of the ideal playhouse in "The National Theatre," is full of inspiration for us all. It is heartening, also, to note that Mr. Reginald Denham, in "Stage and Screen," considers that despite (or because of) the cinema, the essential part of the theatre will live as long as men have voices, vision and wrists to write. Mr. Norman Marshall in "The Producer's Aim," provides, in a short essay, as much guidance for producers as can be found in some of the large, pretentious tomes on the subject. Acting is dealt with by Miss Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies and Mr. William Devlin; the Repertory Movement by Mr. William Armstrong; the Amateur Movement by Mr. John Bourne (apparently suffering from an overdose of the subject). Even the Manager's point of view receives able attention from Mr. Bronson Albery, although we regret to see in his frank statement of expenses only a tiny reference to any royalties for the unhappy dramatist.

M. Serge Lifar, at the beginning of 1936, was invited by the Committee for the organisation of the second Congrès International d'Esthétique et de Science de l'Art to deliver a lecture on the aesthetics of dancing. We do not know how long the actual lecture was, but it took the author a year and a half to compose, and, when finished, was so voluminous that, published under the title of "Ballet Traditional to Modern" (translated by Mr. Cyril W. Beaumont), it makes a long, closely-written book. This book will, no doubt, be eagerly read by the many who, to judge from the amount written

on the subject, study ballet incessantly.

Volume III of Mr. Herbert Norris's "Costume and Fashion" consists of two large books, the first dealing with Henry VII and Henry VIII, the second with Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth. Copiously illustrated and with a wealth of detail, they make better reading than most books of the same type, although, possibly, Mr. Norris is too lenient with the historical characters of whose lives we are given such strange glimpses. The vast sums spent on clothes are staggering, and the descriptions of the ever-increasing use of luxurious accessories of all kinds bestows on the pages a glitter faintly comparable to the effect of those remarkable costumes which were covered with ornaments and jewels from head to foot—and in which the wearer could scarcely move. Students and stage designers will discover material of all kinds in these books for their work.

Mr. Peter Goffin, whose work at the Westminster Theatre is well known, frankly considers that the labels "amateur" and "professional" have nothing to do with art, and so his book, "Stage Lighting for Amateurs" is free from the Olympian attitude of the professional worker which is still far too common. Indeed, as early as page 38, he states that the idea that the stages and equipment of the professional theatre represent an ideal is as mistaken as it is prevalent—and this absence of conservatism no doubt accounts for his refreshing readiness to welcome experiment.

"Plays for Puppets and Marionettes" by Miss Rosalind Vallance, contains six plays and some poems, and also a useful introduction in which Miss Vallance says the book has been mainly written for children who have tried out their own plays and now would like to attempt someone else's. They should not find amusing little pieces such as "The Weather House," the more ambitious "Thumbelina" or the ballad "Allison Gross" unduly difficult, especially as there are production notes and line and colour illustrations by Mr. George Beaumont. To a list of fabulous monsters on page 19 a "push-me-pull-you" is added. This is a new beast to us.

F. SLADEN-SMITH.

### HELP FOR THE REFUGEES

A Committee has been formed representing the Theatre, Cinema and Music world to organise a National Appeal on Saturday, January 14, on behalf of the Lord Baldwin Fund for Refugees. All over the country cinemas, theatres and music halls will contribute ten per cent. of their takings, and the producing companies will, of course, contribute their share of the ten per cent. Authors are arranging also to contribute ten per cent. of their royalties, and many artists have agreed to contribute ten per cent. of their salaries.

Mr. Sidney L. Bernstein will be pleased to send further details of the scheme to any theatre or amateur dramatic society willing to co-operate. Posters, collection boxes and other facilities are offered to make the Collection a success, and all those willing to help should communicate at once with Mr. Bernstein at the Bernstein Theatres Limited, 36, Golden Square, London, W.1.

We should like to commend this excellent idea to all those readers of "Drama" who are in a position to co-operate.



SCENE FROM "AFRICA" A PLAY ABOUT  
COLONIAL EXPANSION, FIRST PRODUCED  
IN FLORENCE. SETTING BY M. TEMPESTINI,  
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF G. VENTURINI.  
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TELEVISION PERFORMANCE OF "NIGHT MUST FALL" BY EMLYN WILLIAMS, AT ALEXANDRA PALACE.  
With Kathleen Harrison, Joan Brierley, Vivienne Bennett, Ethel Griffies, and Esmond Knight as "Dan."

# B.D.L. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MINUTES of the Nineteenth Annual General Meeting held on Friday, November 25th, 1938, at 3 p.m., at 9, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

## Present :

Lord Esher (in the Chair) and 23 members.

The Minutes of the last meeting, published in "Drama," were taken as read and signed.

## Annual Report :

In moving the adoption of the Report, Mr. Whitworth called the attention of the members to the drop in membership of 42—this being the first year that the League's membership had not shown an increase. Since the publication of the report, however, 96 of the lapsed members had paid up, so that if the report had been printed a month later, the membership would have shown an increase. Mr. Whitworth thought that members might like to know how the present International situation was affecting the League. In the month of October there was a rather serious fall, but this month there had already been 83 new members. Last year during the whole of November, 81 members joined, so this year the League was well up—a fact which reflected great credit on the country.

Mr. Whitworth then outlined the principal points in the report which had been printed in the November number of "Drama."

In conclusion, Mr. Whitworth said he would like to thank all the members of the Staff, and especially Miss Briggs for the able and loyal manner in which they helped in the work of the League.

He then invited Dr. Boas, the Chairman of the Library Committee to deal with that part of the report dealing with the Library.

Dr. Boas said he thought the Library was increasingly useful on all its various sides, and the figures were satisfactory. The Library Committee were considering the question of issuing a new catalogue. Unfortunately there was the question of expense, but the Committee felt it was important to have as up-to-date a catalogue as possible. He concluded by saying how much the League was indebted to the work of Miss Coates and her assistants who had made the Library a very pleasant place.

The Annual Report was unanimously adopted.

## Balance Sheet :

In moving the adoption of the Balance Sheet, Mr. Rea said the League had managed to keep its head above water, but the accounts showed £126 on the wrong side, this being the first year that there had been a deficit.

The Costume Department had made a loss, but he had no doubt that the Department, if properly supported, would be a profitable undertaking. It had an energetic Chairman in Mr. B. L. Sutcliffe, and a good staff, and it was up to the members to support this activity.

Mr. Rea reported that earlier in the year the Council had appointed a Finance and General Purposes Committee which met regularly, and which had been carefully investigating the work of the League. He felt that they were looking after the interests of the League extremely well, and he welcomed the co-operation of this active and enthusiastic Committee.

Mr. Clifford Bax asked if the Costumes were advertised enough, and if they were too expensive.

Mr. Sutcliffe replied that he thought they were being

advertised, and prices were lower than those of other firms.

A question was asked about the high audit fee, Mr. Rea replied that he considered the fee was reasonable in view of the amount of work involved.

The Balance Sheet was adopted unanimously.

## Report of Election of Council :

The Director read a list as follows of the members of the Council elected for the coming year :—

Trustees : Lord Howard de Walden, Lord Esher, Mr. Alec L. Rea and Mr. Kenneth Barnes.

National Members : Mr. Clifford Bax, Mr. B. J. Benson, Dr. F. S. Boas, Mr. Ivor Brown, Mrs. Nesfield Cookson, Mr. Ashley Dukes, Mr. T. S. Eliot, Miss Elsie Fogerty, Miss Mary Kelly, Mr. Norman Marshall, Mr. C. Harold Ridge, Professor T. H. Searls, Miss Janet Scrutton, Mr. B. L. Sutcliffe and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth.

Regional Members : Mr. Walter R. Cuthbert, representing the Scottish Community Drama Association ; Major W. North Coates, Mr. John Hirst, Mr. J. W. Sutcliffe and Mr. A. H. Whipple representing the Northern Area ; Mr. E. S. Darmady, Mr. W. Bushill-Matthews, Mr. E. J. Tapley and Mr. Percy Thompson representing the Western Area ; Mr. E. Stuart Monro, Miss Florence Smith, Mrs. Ronald Smith and Mr. S. N. Whitehead representing the Eastern Area ; Lady Iris Capell, Mr. A. H. Wharrier, representing London ; Mr. T. J. Lewis representing Wales.

Co-opted Members : Mr. Lewis Casson, Mr. E. Martin Browne, Mr. John Hampden, Mr. George O. Sharman, Mr. C. B. Purdom, and Miss Gertrude Jennings. Mr. Walter Payne representing the Society of West End Theatre Managers ; The Hon. Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton representing the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre ; Mr. J. Fisher White representing British Actors' Equity ; and Mr. Percy Hutchison representing The Theatrical Managers' Association.

## Election of Auditors :

It was proposed by Mr. Clifford Bax, seconded by Sir Kenneth Barnes, and

RESOLVED :—"That Messrs. Blakemore, Elgar and Company should be re-elected."

## Alteration in Rule VII.

Proposed by Mr. Whitehead :—

"That Rule VII (c) should be amended to read 'that the 18 members to represent the Regions on the Council shall be elected annually by such means as the Council may see fit to adopt' ; and that the scheme adopted by the Council shall be brought before the next General Meeting for ratification."

Mr. Whitehead said that his reason for moving this resolution was that he felt that the present method of appointing regional members to the Council had proved a failure. This was partly because there was no dramatic unity in the Counties. The experience of the Festival organisation showed that districts could be grouped together more successfully according to lines of communication than according to geographical boundaries. The present scheme had not succeeded in promoting activity in the majority of counties, and had brought little, if any, increase in membership.

The wording of the resolution was purposely loose so that the General Purposes Committee could get to

## B.D.L. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

work at once and try to formulate a scheme for the next election. If the scheme was found successful it could be ratified at the next Annual General Meeting.

Mrs. Ronald Smith asked if it was proposed to abolish County Committees.

Mr. Whitehead replied that no scheme had yet been formulated, but he personally thought that an effort should be made to avoid basing the election of representatives to the Council on the County Committees as they existed to-day.

Dr. Boas proposed an amendment that the words "or otherwise" should be inserted after the word "ratification." This was accepted by Mr. Whitehead.

The Resolution as amended ran as follows:—

*"That Rule VII (c) should be amended to read: 'that the 18 members to represent the Regions on the Council shall be elected annually by such means as the Council may see fit to adopt'; and that the scheme adopted by the Council shall be brought before the next General Meeting, for ratification, or otherwise."*

This was seconded by Mr. Sutcliffe and carried unanimously.

### Other Business:

A letter was read from the Tepeaitch Social and Sports Club asking if the Annual General Meeting could be held either in the evening or on a Saturday afternoon, to enable more members to attend. It was pointed out that an evening meeting would not be very convenient for country members.

After a short discussion, the Chairman proposed that as a compromise the meeting next year might be held at 5 p.m.

This was passed unanimously.

In proposing a vote of thanks to Lord Esher for taking the Chair, Sir Kenneth Barnes said that he thought the meeting probably did not realise how extraordinarily lucky the League was to have Lord Esher as its Chairman—only those who attended Council meetings regularly could know what an expert Chairman he was. He possessed three essential qualities, timing, firmness and a sense of humour, and all members were very grateful to him for his work for the League.

In reply, Lord Esher said he was grateful for the far too flattering words of Sir Kenneth Barnes. Although he was the Chairman of a great many organisations, he did not know how anyone could fail to be interested and keen on the League, and he found the Chairmanship of the Council one of the most fascinating and interesting tasks he had ever undertaken. The chairmanship of the meeting to-day had been an unusually easy task. He remembered in the past far stormier and exciting meetings taking place in that room. He thought it was a sign that whatever might be the condition of the world, appeasement as a policy seemed to have been a success here. Lord Esher concluded by wishing the League another successful year.

The Meeting then concluded.

## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

### MRS. FRANK WORTHINGTON'S MATINÉES

"INTERVENTION" by PHOEBE MEIRION REES

Mrs. Frank Worthington, whose theatrical matinées, for the benefit of many good causes, are now an established part of London's dramatic season, has given, at the Strand Theatre, during December, two matinées of a new play, "Intervention," by Miss P. M. Rees, based upon an episode in the life of the Comtesse de la Villirouet, during the "terror" phase of the French Revolution, in 1793, and after.

Miss Rees' play somewhat lacks distinction in dialogue; and needs compression, particularly in the first and last acts; but it has some tensely dramatic, and gripping, moments, which keep it thoroughly alive. Mr. Herbert Chown, the producer, helped by the period costume, provided some striking stage-pictures, well-pleasing to the eye. The "Portia" part of the lady-advocate, Comtesse de la Villirouet, was sympathetically played by Mrs. Frank Worthington, whose long experience of stage work has given her technical ease, and a fine command of gesture, especially in the expressive use of her hands. Her appearance, in the last act, as her husband's Counsel, wearing a classical white dress, copied exactly from the original painting of the one worn by the Countess during the historic trial, was most striking; and will be remembered by all who saw it. Presence, as well as technique, counts for much on the stage. From a strictly histrionic view-point, the performances that stood out, most prominently, in a cast that was partly amateur, were

those of two professional actors, Messrs. Hubert Langley, as the Count, and George Woodbridge, as his proletarian antagonist.

The Pontypridd Welsh Ladies Choir sang, during the intervals. After paying expenses, the matinées yielded a net profit of over £4,460—a magnificent result, from which the managements of the Q Camps, the Greater London Fund for the Blind, and the Bird Sanctuaries of the Selborne Society, will have occasion warmly to thank Mrs. Worthington, and her loyal supporters.

PERCY ALLEN.

### THE HOWARD PLAYERS

On December 8th the Howard Players had the pleasure of presenting Mr. F. Sladen-Smith's full length play "Valley Shadow" in St. Stephen's Hall, Bouremouth. This very fine play, which is as yet unpublished, had not previously been performed in that town. It met with a most enthusiastic welcome from the large audience present, and it is hoped it will be repeated a number of times during the coming year. The proceeds were devoted to the National Trust, a peculiarly appropriate Charity. The very effective settings were designed and executed by the Players, who endeavour to make up in enthusiasm and initiative for their lack of numbers and their very limited financial resources. The Howard Players are very proud of the fact that the honour of introducing so brilliant and original a play was reserved for one of the smallest

## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

and most recently formed groups in a neighbourhood boasting so many amateur dramatic societies. On October 22nd they repeated one of their earlier successes, "Genius at Home" by Elizabeth Drew. This play also received its first Bournemouth production at their hands.

### "GROUNDLING'S DELIGHT"

THE LEWISHAM CHILDREN'S THEATRE GUILD

This Guild, already described in November "Drama," gave a Pageant of Drama at Lewisham Town Hall on October 25th. The whole production was full of interest, showing the work of many producers and of a very large number of children, not only as players, but as scene painters, costume makers, and property men. Five or six schools collaborated in each scene, and the producers had been most successful in creating a unity out of what might easily have been divergent elements. One production that remains in the memory as remarkably finished and mature was that of a scene from "The School for Scandal," but all the way through live little performances stood out, and the whole air of gaiety and enjoyment conveyed itself to the audience. The decor was simple and effective, completely free from shoddy effects and pleasantly clear and definite in colour.

M. K.

### THE MERCURY THEATRE "THE TAVERNERS"

This company gave a programme of the plays which they are accustomed to take to public houses, at the Mercury Theatre during the first week in December. The programme was well varied and contained some excellent plays, but the acting did not reach a good amateur standard, and lacked that vitality which one would suppose necessary for work of this kind. In "St. Patrick's Day" there was an attempt to force the humour by heavy clowning or by too frequent repetition of effect, but the real lighthearted nonsensical gaiety was lost. Fortunately, in Quintero's play, played with reality and pathos, but again the humour of the play was not fully realized and its delicate contrasts were blurred.

M. K.

### "THE GHOST TRAIN" BONHOMIE PLAYERS

The Bonhomie Players gave their seventh production "The Ghost Train" which they presented at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, on Friday evening, December 2nd. Their team work was excellent and the difficult sound effects could not have been bettered. The play was produced by Mr. Eric Pryor, who gave a very easy performance as Richard Winthrop.

M. V.

### ESSEX COUNTY COMMITTEE

A Dramatic Reading of "Winter's Tale" directed by Mrs. Gregory Nicholson, was given in the Victoria Hall, Chelmsford, by invitation of Mrs. Holl and Mrs. Wigley, on December 3rd. Some spirited characterisations were presented.

## PIVOT CLUB

"Not Time's Fool," by Marion Cole, was the prize winning play in the original play competition organised by the Pivot Club this year. A performance of this play was given at the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art on December 5th, and although it did not quite "get across" the footlights, it was interesting to watch. At times the dialogue ran away from the original theme which was rather involved, and it was difficult to gather the threads together again. With some cutting and tightening up, particularly in the last act, it should prove a good choice for amateur societies. The play provides several good character studies of the residents of a West of England village, and there are no difficult changes of scene. The author was well served, in most instances, by her cast and her producers.

J. R.

## NATIONAL THEATRE PERFORMANCE

Fulham is to be congratulated upon so splendidly supporting the National Theatre. On Friday, October 14th, "Judgment Day" by Elmer Rice, was presented by members of the Fulham Amateur Dramatic Societies in aid of the Mayor of Fulham's National Theatre Appeal, with the object of endowing a seat for the borough.

The play was splendidly produced by Vincent Pearmain and intelligently played by an excellent cast. Wilfred T. Sharp as George Khitov and Jeanne Laskey as Lydia Kuman deserve special mention. The music, composed for the production and also conducted by Don Snowsell, was admirable.

MOLLY VENESS.

## A WELSH PLAY

Welsh dramatic societies, and other societies likely to be interested in a play on a Welsh theme, might be glad to see the MS. play "The Hillman-Hugheses," a comedy in three acts by Mr. E. Pryce Roberts. This was one of the winners in a play-writing competition conducted by the Trecynon Little Theatre last summer in search for local talent. The play is said to act exceedingly well and the royalties are low. The MS. of the play can be obtained from the Drama League Library on application.

## BABER REPERTORY

The Baber Repertory Company are to be commended for presenting "Flowers of the Forest" at the Twentieth Century Theatre, Westbourne Grove, on December 14th and 15th. This study in war and post-war mentality is a Van Druten play which is too little known: its message is not so dramatic a climax as the author intended it to be, but the play provides many possibilities. Margaret Room, Peter Cain and Anthony Short gave the outstanding performances, and, although several of the scenes were under-acted, the production as a whole was extremely creditable.

KENNETH INGRAM.

# THE NORTHERN AREA FULL LENGTH PLAY CONTEST

THE Preliminary Adjudications for the Northern Area's Full Length Play Contest have been entrusted to Mr. Frank Harwood, who will visit all the plays submitted for adjudication, and select the best six to participate in a Festival at Buxton on Monday to Saturday, April 24th to 29th, at which a Trophy, kindly presented by the Buxton Corporation, will be awarded to the best of the six.

Below is given a list of the productions submitted for adjudication. The exact dates on which Mr. Harwood will adjudicate have not yet been decided.

Entries may still be accepted provided they are for days on which Mr. Harwood is not already engaged. Entrance fee, 2 guineas. Apply: Mr. John Hirst 9, Blackfriars St., Manchester.

Thursday, December 22nd. Castner Kellner A.D.S. The Royalty Theatre, Chester. "Death takes a Holiday" by Alberto Cassella (ad. Walter Ferris).  
 Friday and Saturday, January 13th and 14th. The Delta Players. The David Lewis Theatre, Liverpool. "Rosmersholm," by Henrik Ibsen.  
 Thursday to Saturday, January 19th to 21st. Penrith Players. The Drill Hall, Penrith. "What Every Woman Knows," by J. M. Barrie.  
 Monday and Tuesday, January 23rd and 24th. Tramway Players. St. Benit's Hall, Sunderland. "The Walkleys" by Harold Pointer.  
 Wednesday and Thursday, February 1st and 2nd. Tramway Players. St. Benit's Hall, Sunderland. "The Walkleys" by Harold Pointer.  
 Tuesday to Thursday, January 24th to 26th. The Imperial Players. Wentworth Hall, Doncaster. "Bonnet over the Windmill," by Dodie Smith.  
 Thursday to Saturday, January 26th to 28th. Outsiders D.S. Coronation Hall, Ulverston. "Pride and Prejudice," by J. C. Squire.  
 Saturday, January 28th. Durham D.S. St. Margaret's Hall, Durham. "Children in Uniform," by Christa Winsloe (Trans. Barbara Burnham).  
 Thursday to Saturday, February 2nd to 4th. Lancaster Footlights Club. Jubilee Hall, Lancaster. "Cradle Song," by Gregorio and Maria Sierra.  
 Saturday, February 4th, or Saturday, February 11th. Malet Lambert Old Students. Hull. "Tobias and the Angel," by Bridie.  
 Tuesday to Saturday, February 7th to 11th. The Preston Drama Club. Grimshaw Street School, Preston. "Yes and No," by Kenneth Horne.  
 Thursday to Saturday, February 9th to 11th. Sheffield Playgoers' Club. Y.M.C.A. Hall, Sheffield. "The Tempest," by Shakespeare.  
 Monday to Saturday, February 13th to 18th. Lionel Lightfoot's Company. Her Majesty's Theatre, Carlisle. "At the Sign of the Black Virgin," by Robert Gilbert.

Tuesday and Wednesday, February 14th and 15th. Conssett Community Players. Daly's Hall, Conssett. "Distinguished Gathering," an original play.  
 Wednesday to Saturday, February 15th to 18th. York Settlement Community Players. "The Pillars of Society," by Henrik Ibsen.  
 Friday and Saturday, February 24th and 25th. The Salisbury Players. Crane Theatre, Liverpool.  
 Friday and Saturday, February 24th and 25th. Buxton Branch of the B.D.L. The Playhouse, Buxton. "Family Affairs," by Gertrude Jennings.  
 Monday to Saturday, February 27th to March 4th. Halifax Thespians. Alexandra Hall, Halifax. "Power and Glory," by Karl Kapek.  
 Thursday, March 2nd. Barrow A.O. & D.S. The Public Hall, Barrow.  
 Saturday, March 4th: Monday to Saturday, March 6th to 11th. Literary and Scientific Society. Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge. "Granite," by Clemence Dane.  
 Monday and Saturday, March 20th and 25th. Morley Adult School Players. Morley Adult School, Morley. "A Collier's Friday Night," by D. H. Lawrence.  
 Monday to Friday, March 20th to 24th. C.W.S. Balloon Strut Players. Mitchell Memorial Hall, Sunderland.  
 Tuesday, March 21st. Silloth D.S. The Pavilion, Silloth. "The Happy Prodigal," by Ernest Denny.  
 Wednesday to Saturday, March 22nd to 25th. The Sunderland Drama Club. The Victoria Hall, Sunderland. "The Rivals," by Richard Brindley Sheridan.  
 Saturday, March 25th. Colne D.S. Municipal Hall, Colne.  
 Monday to Saturday, March 27th to April 1st. Wilmslow Beacon Guild. The Guild Hall, Wilmslow.  
 Tuesday and Wednesday, March 28th and 29th. Chesterfield Playgoers' Society. Bradbury Hall, Chesterfield. "Thunder in the Air," by Robins Miller.  
 Tuesday and Thursday, March 28th and 30th, and Saturday, April 1st. Colne D.S. Municipal Hall, Colne.  
 Wednesday, March 29th and Friday and Saturday March 31st and April 1st. The Rowntree Players. The Joseph Rowntree Theatre, York.  
 Thursday and Friday, March 30th and 31st. Stockton Masquers. Palais de Dance, Stockton.  
 Thursday to Saturday, March 30th to April 1st. Bawtry A.D.S. Bawtry Hall Theatre, Bawtry.  
 Thursday to Saturday, March 30th to April 1st. Boots' A.D.S. Y.W.C.A. Theatre, Nottingham.  
 Wednesday and Thursday, April 5th and 6th. Hexagon Players. Central Library, Manchester. "Sweet Alocs," by Jay Mallory.  
 Dates not yet decided:  
 The Crescent Players. The Pavilion, Winnington.  
 Cockermouth W.E.A. Players.  
 Garrett Players. The Royal Institution, Hull.  
 "Berkeley Square," by J. C. Squire.  
 Hull Corporation Electricity Drama Society. The Royal Institution, Hull.  
 The Sharrah Club. The Royal Institution, Hull.



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